

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 3644

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINT, EGEN

SUBJ: LEIGH BLASTS FREI

REF: SANTIAGO 3613

1. SUMMARY: IN MAY 30 SPEECH, AIR FORCE CINC AND JUNTA MEMBER GEN GUSTAVO LEIGH SEVERELY CASTIGATED EX-PRESIDENT FREI FOR LATTER'S CRITICISM OF JUNTA'S AUSTERITY PROGRAM FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY, AS EXPOUNDED IN RECENT "ERCILLA" INTERVIEW (REFTEL). TWO EXTREME RIGHTWING CIVILIAN SUPPORTERS OF JUNTA, JAIME GUZMAN AND PABLO RODRIGUEZ, ALSO JOINED CHORUS, BUT MOST OTHER TOP GOC LEADERS INCLUDING PINOCHET HAVE BEEN NOTABLY RESTRAINED SO FAR. WE EXPECT CONTINUED REVERBERATIONS FROM FREI INTERVIEW, WHICH MAY DELINEATE MORE SHARPLY THOSE IN GOC WHO DESIRE CONFRONTATION WITH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (PDC) AND THOSE WHO DO NOT. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING LENGTHY MAY 30 SPEECH TO STUDENTS AT UNIV OF THE NORTH IN ANTOFAGASTA, AIR FORCE CINC AND JUNTA MEMBER GEN GUSTAVO LEIGH MADE SHARP RIPOSTE TO FREI INTERVIEW (REFTEL). LEIGH DID NOT CITE EX-PRESIDENT BY NAME, BUT LEFT NO DOUBT AS TO HIS TARGET (LARGEST CIRCULATION "LA TERCERA" HEADLINED "GEN LEIGH: FREI IS A TYPICAL DEMOGOGUE").

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3. WITHIN CONTEXT OF CHAOTIC ECONOMIC INHERITANCE FROM PRE-

VIOUS GOVERNMENTS, AGGRAVATED BY WORLD ECONOMIC SITUATION AND "INTERNATIONAL MARXIST CAMPAIGN" AGAINST GOC, LEIGH SAID: "THEN THERE ARE THOSE WHO SEEK TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE PRESENT DIFFICULTY FOR PERSONAL AND PARTISAN POLITICAL ENDS. THEY ARE THE SAME PEOPLE WHOSE DEMOGOGUERY AND WEAKNESS DESTROYED THE PRINCIPLE OF (GOVERNMENTAL) AUTHORITY." LEIGH TICKED OFF HISTORY OF SEIZURES (TOMAS) OF UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS, FARMS, BUSINESSES, AND PRIVATE PROPERTY, FORMATION (IN 1965) OF EXTREMIST MOVEMENT OF REVOLUTIONARY LEFT (MIR), AND "INTELLECTUAL SHALLOWNESS" WHICH PLAYED COMMUNIST GAME OF PRATTING ABOUT UNDEFINED SOCIAL CHANGE.

4. "AND NOW THESE PEOPLE, INSTEAD OF EXPIATING THEIR GUILT IN A DISCREET AND PATRIOTIC SILENCE, OR JOINING IN THE RECONSTRUCTION EFFORT, HAVE THE GALL TO ISSUE SHALLOW CRITIQUES WHICH STIMULATE A CLIMATE OF LACK OF CONFIDENCE OR ALARM, WITHOUT THE HONESTY OF RECOGNIZING THEIR OWN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PRESENT SITUATION AND WITHOUT PROPOSING ANY SOLID AND WELL-REASONED ALTERNATIVE TO PRESENT GOVERNMENT POLICIES... WHAT MEASURES DO YOU PROPOSE, SIR? AND HE ANSWERS: 'ONE HAS TO ADOPT A PACKAGE OF MEASURES WITHIN AN ORGANIC CONTEXT' (A DIRECT QUOTE FROM FREI INTERVIEW). THIS IS HIS REPLY. IT MAKES ONE LAUGH, BECAUSE IT IS THE TYPICAL REPLY OF A DEMOGOGIC POLITICIAN."

5. LEIGH ADDED THAT, IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR MILITARY COUP WHICH SAVED CHILE FROM COMMUNISM, SUCH POLITICIANS WOULD BEAR THE "UNERASABLE HISTORICAL STIGMA OF BEING THE CHILEAN KERENSKYS". IN ANY EVENT, SUCH REMARKS "ONLY CONFIRM FOR US THE NEED TO REDOUBLE OUR CLEARLY AUTHORITARIAN POSITION". "WE ARE RESOLVED TO CONSOLIDATE A NEW POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL SYSTEM FOR CHILE, WHETHER CERTAIN TINY AND DISPLACED POLITICAL GROUPS LIKE IT OR NOT, (GROUPS) WHOSE CONDUCT CONFIRMS EVEN MORE THE VALIDITY OF THE POLITICAL RECESSION WHICH WE HAVE IMPOSED AND WILL CONTINUE TO IMPOSE FOR THE GOOD OF CHILE."

6. SPEAKING ON GOVT. TV CHANNEL MAY 29, RIGHT-WING JUNTA ADVISER JAIME GUZMAN SHARPLY CONTRASTED YOUTH SECRETARIAT'S "SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN" (SANTIAGO 3616) WITH "EDUARDO FREI'S VOICE FROM THE PAST, WHOSE TONE IS ONE OF INEVITABLE BITTERNESS".

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7. WRITING IN "LA TERCERA" JUNE 2, PABLO RODRIGUEZ, LEADER OF SELF-DISBANDED EXTREME RIGHT "PATRIA Y LIBERTAD" ALSO MOUNTED A STRONG ATTACK ON FREI BY NAME AND ON CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, ACCUSING BOTH OF "COWARDLY AND UNDERHANDEDLY" OPPOSITION TO JUNTA EVER SINCE THE COUP.

8. IN MARKED CONTRAST, MAINSTREAM LEADERS OF GOC AND MEDIA COMMENTATORS HAVE BEEN RESTRAINED IN THEIR REPLIES, APPARENTLY

TAKING CUE FROM MINECONOMY DE CASTRO'S INTERVIEW IN "QUE PASA" (REFTEL). EVEN THOUGH PRES PINOCHET MADE TWO WEEKEND PUBLIC SPEAKING APPEARANCES AND GRANTED "EL MERCURIO" LENGTHY INTERVIEW, HE LIMITED HIS COMMENTNS TO REAFFIRMATION OF CORRECTNESS OF GOVT'S PRESENT ECONOMIC POLICIES AND OF GOC DESIRE TO AMELIORATE SUFFERING, ESPECIALLY FOR LOW INCOME GROUPS, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

9. COMMENT: "DIALOGUE" ON ECONOMIC POLICY ADVOCATED BY FREI HAS THUS IN PART DEGENERATED INTO ANAME-CALLING, MUD-SLINGING AFFAIR. REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF FREI (AND IMPLICITLY PDC) WILL RESPOND TO LEIGH'S CHALLENGE TO SPELL OUT A SPECIFIC ALTERNATIVE TO GOC ECONOMIC POLICIES. ALTHOUGH FREI SAID HE SPECIFICALLY LIMITED HIS COMMENTS TO ECONOMIC SPHERE, THEY HAD OBVIOUS POLITICAL IMPORT. HIS SHARPEST CRITICS KNOW THAT, AND RESPONDED ACCORDINGLY, BUT WITH A BITTERNESS THAT APPEARS TO REMOVE ANY LINGERING POSSIBILITY OF A RECONCILIATION OR MODUS VIVENDI BETWEEN FREI AND THE MODERATE FORCES AROUND HIM WITH THE GROUP EPITOMIZED BY LEIGH AND GUZMAN. AT ANY EVENT, WE EXPECT CONTINUED REVERBERATIONS FROM FREI INTERVIEW.

10. IT MAY BE SIGNIFICANT THAT PINOCHET AND MOST OTHER TOP GOC LEADERS HAVE NOT CHOSEN, AT LEAST SO FAR, TO STOOP TO LEIGH'S LEVEL OF SLANDER. AS WE HAVE REPORTED REFTEL AND PREVIOUSLY, MAINSTREAM GOC SHOWS NO DESIRE FOR ALL-OUT CONFRONTATION WITH PDC, WHICH LEIGH AND HIS SUPPORTERS APPARENTLY WELCOME.
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